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SUBJECT: INDIA LAUNCHES A NEW SALVO IN ASIAN MISSILE RACE

REF: A. SECSTATE 20964
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 04767

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius, for reasons 1.4 (a, b, d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) (NOTE: This cable is intended in part to fulfill reporting requirements outlined in SECSTATE 20964. END NOTE.) SUMMARY: India successfully test-fired an indigenously-designed submerged ballistic missile on February 26, signaling its intent and eventual capability to launch submarine-based nuclear missiles. Pakistan's Naval Chief publicly protested the test, claiming that India's actions would provoke a new arms-race in South Asia. Both India and Pakistan have spurred forward with their indigenous missile production organizations during the past twelve months with visibly different aims. Pakistan has busily conducted multiple tests of its medium-ranged missile strike force with an eye towards deterring India, while India has instead focused on developing missile defense systems, long-range strikes, and sea-based missile strikes. India clearly has a more remote and formidable threat than Pakistan in its sights, judging by the thrust of work in its strategic strike capability. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (S/NF) India successfully launched a missile designated the Sagirika K-15 on February 26 from a submerged pontoon simulating a submarine. Indian media described the missile as a two-stage, solid-propellant weapon weighing seven tons with a payload capacity of 500 to 600 kg, 6.5 meters in length, and having a range of 700 km. India's state-operated Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) praised the test as proof that India now has capability to launch nuclear-tipped missiles from land, sea and air. The DRDO announced its intentions to install the Sagirika missiles onto a submarine as soon as possible. The first vessels to be fitted could be French-designed Scorpene or Russian-designed Akula submarines. Indian scientists have been working in secret for more than 20 years on an indigenous nuclear-powered submarine, the so-called Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV), and the MOD confirmed in late 2007 that its first operational test-cruise is scheduled for 2009. Pakistan's Naval Chief Admiral Tahir publicly protested the K-15 test,

noting to press this "is going to start a new arms race in the region - this is a very serious issue."

¶3. (S/NF) India and Pakistan signed an agreement in 2005 detailing protocols for conducting non-hostile ballistic missile tests, including a requirement to notify each other's government in advance of any live-fire test. Between August 2007 and February 2008, Islamabad availed itself of this protocol on at least five separate occasions, launching live-fire tests of nearly all of its known strategic missile arsenal, including:

- August 2007: the 350 km-range "Ra-ad" (Hatf 8) air-launched cruise missile
- December 2007: the 700 km-range "Babur" (Hatf 7) cruise missile
- January 2008: the 700 km-range "Shaheen 1" (Hatf 4) ballistic missile
- February 2008: the 1,300 km-range "Gauri" (Hatf 5) ballistic missile
- February 2008: the 300 km-range "Ghaznavi" (Hatf 3) ballistic missile

¶4. (S/NF) During the same time period, New Delhi conducted live-fire tests of a number of ballistic missiles, including:

- August 2007: the 3000 km-range Agni 3 ballistic missile
- October 2007: the 700 km-range Agni 1 ballistic missile
- February 2008: the 700 km-range "Sagirika" (K-15) submerged-launch ballistic missile (SLBM)
- March 2008: the 290 km-range "Brahmos" cruise missile,

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sea-to-land test

India conducted live-fire tests of indigenously-designed missile-defense missiles, one in December 2006 and the second type in December 2007. These missiles, modified versions of the short-range Indian Prithvi ballistic missile, were test-fired to intercept live ballistic missiles simulating incoming enemy missiles. The DRDO publicly announced January 2007 its intentions to test-launch a so-called "Agni 4" ballistic missile with a reported range of 5000+ km sometime in 2008.

COMMENT: INDIAN CLAIMS OF MISSILE PROWESS ARE PREMATURE

¶5. (S/NF) BEGIN COMMENT: The Indian press and DRDO boasted that the K-15 test places India firmly in the exclusive club of nations (the U.S., Russia, France and China) with the ability to launch submerged ballistic missiles - neatly glossing over the fact that India remains, for several more years, completely dependent on foreign-made submarines from which to launch. Even if the ATV sub is successfully inducted into the Indian arsenal on time, Delhi will still need years more to install the K-15 system into the ATV and to master the technology of successfully conducting submerged ballistic launches. The DRDO claim that India has the ability to launch nuclear-tipped missiles from the air is presumably a reference to the planned deployment of the Brahmos cruise missile as an air-launched missile slung under a SU-30 attack aircraft. This claim is also premature, as the successful airborne-launch of the Brahmos is at least one year away, in 2009.

INDIAN SEA-STRIKE CAPABILITY NOT SOLELY INTENDED FOR PAKISTAN

¶6. (S/NF) India has succeeded in a critical step towards adding the formidable option - a sea-based strike - to its strategic missile arsenal, making Islamabad's public expression of angst understandable. The majority of Pakistani cities lie easily within reach of existing Indian land-based Agni missiles, and only one sits within logical

striking distance of a sea-borne missile launch - Karachi.
India's SLBM is intended to deter not Pakistan but rather
China, the only other country on India's border that can
pose an existential threat. END COMMENT.

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